

The Sunday School Service.

BY DAVID BAILEY.

Dec. 7th, 1884.

Drunkenness.—Prov. 23: 29-35.

GOLDEN TEXT: "Be not among wine-bibbers.—Prov. 23: 29.

[Open the Bible and read the lesson.]

INTRODUCTION.

I feel that this subject is very opportune. Did I not know that it was selected more than a year ago, I would think that it had been chosen on account of the peculiar signs of the present time.

That drunkenness is a great evil and should be driven from the land, is not denied by any thinking man. The drinkers themselves will admit as much when in their sober senses, but as to the method of bringing about a consummation so much to be desired, there is a great difference of opinion. It must be borne in mind, however, that so far as the law is concerned it is penal and not preventive. If the violator of the law pays his fine or suffers imprisonment as the law directs, the law is satisfied and the man is free to sin again. It is in this that the law fails. It treats men as brutes and it is as difficult to make good men by law as to cut wood with a stone-hammer. Temperance like mercy and the other virtues, is not put on as a garment, but comes from the heart outward, and he who appeals to the law to convert his brother, is either selfish or simple, and does not understand the first principles of Christianity. He would bind on earth what God has loosed in heaven.

"The Bible considers intemperance in all its phases, and shows that it with all other sins, springs from a sinfulness which is common to all mankind, and shows also that the true remedy for it, as for all sins, lies in the deliverance divinely provided for the sinfulness which is their root."

"This is the reason why 'prohibition does not prohibit.' It may be that, in the course of a few generations, respect for the law might be enforced, but there is a better, a Christian way. Nothing can be a cure for intemperance, or any other sin, which does not bring about repentance, and I have but little confidence in that repentance brought about by punishment either actual or prospective.

"The Gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation."

Arnot says: "To fear retribution is not to hate sin; in most cases it is to love it with the whole heart."

Drunkenness is the besetting sin of the age. Its ravages may be seen on every hand, and the injured ones cry aloud for redress. There is not a spot on the civilized earth where there is not an opportunity for a Christian to meet this foe, and it is time we moved upon the works. The conflict will be long but I have faith to believe that if we are properly organized and equipped and fight valiantly and persistently we will conquer at last.

The State of Maine has had prohibition laws for thirty years and has not yet eradicated the evil: who can tell what might have been accomplished in that time without the law?

LESSON.

Verse 29. "Woe." The Hebrew explanation indicating wretchedness or suffering, so the untranslated word in English comes to mean misery. "Contentions." Disputes and wrangling. "Babbling." Idle, foolish talk. "Redness of eyes." Redness of eyes is only the outward sign of general disorder of the system brought about by alcohol.

Verse 30. "Tarry long at the wine." It was customary in oriental countries to continue drinking wine for many hours at a time. "Mixed wine." This might now be translated "mixed drinks." There are a great variety of recipes for concocting pleasant drinks to please the palate of the drinker.

Verse 31. "Look not." This is Solomon's remedy, and a very good one it is. "If sinners entice thee, consent thou not." "Color." Red was the favorite color, and coloring matter was often used to give the wine the proper appearance.

Verse 32. "At the last." When the end comes. "Serpent * * adder." Poisonous reptiles. Alcohol is a deadly poison. It affects the mind as well as the body. There are but few poisons that have the power of creating an appetite for themselves as alcohol does.

Verse 33. "Strange women." Probably "strange visions" would more nearly convey the original idea. The idea is that it effects the mind so that it passes from the control of the will. "Perverse things." The mind under the influence of alcohol does not answer to the will, and the tongue utters perverse things.

Verse 34. This verse shows the danger to which the drunkard is exposed, it is as lying down between two waves in the sea or on top of a mast.

Verse 35. "I will seek it yet again." The drunkard is here represented as speaking to himself, and the object is to show the abject slavery to which he is reduced. He says that he feels very well that it has not hurt him and so he will take it again.

Christian Forbearance.

A distinguished writer has said there is a threefold forbearance. (1.) In judgment; when in doubtful cases we suspend our opinions and censures. (2.) In words; which consists either in not answering, or in giving soft answers. (3.) In deeds; when we render not evil for evil. There are to the Christian the greatest incentives to forbearance. The express command of the word of God. "With all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love," and "Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye." We need to have forbearance toward ourselves. What if God dealt with us, as we often deal with others? It was to this end our Lord spoke the parable Matth. 18: 23-35. Who has not some infirmities that need forbearance? "For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man." Therefore, the Apostle admonishes, in reproving an erring brother, consider thyself. "Brethren if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." Our Lord gave the golden rule, therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets. The obligation of Christian charity. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. Most men have some virtues, and all Christians, if imperfect, are Christ's members. Let us not break with those whom Christ has received, because we see their failings. "Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not, and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth; for God hath received him." True charity is "not easily provoked," but beareth (covereth) all things, "believeth all things, and endureth all things." The Lord notices kindly any good thing in His people. "I know thy works; behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it, for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name." His people are too prone to mark the evil and pass by the good.

The sure reward of a forbearing spirit. Resentment brings a just punishment upon itself. Forbearing and forgiving bring rich blessings. The approval of a good conscience sweet peace, and restful quiet, the winning power of Christian character. The harmony and happiness of Christian unity. The example of our Lord presents the strongest motive that could be presented. He is our example, Master, our Head, our Pattern; not to others only, but to ourselves; not once but continually. Oh, my dear friend, how can you be the representative, the living portrait of your Lord, unless you are conformed to His image, and filled with His Spirit? Let us commit ourselves, our all to Him, "who is able to keep us from falling, and present us before the Father without fault." We show that our love is made perfect, by keeping his commandments.

Discouraged Men.

A newspaper once contained an advertisement for a man to fill a certain position, which concluded with, "No discouraged man need apply." This was worldly wisdom, for a discouraged man counts for very little in this world's battle; he is defeated in advance, he faints in the day of adversity; he falters in the conflict, he halts in the race; he weakens beneath the burdens and trials of active life.

This world can do very little for discouraged men. It calls for men of high hope; men who have not yet found out that all is vanity and vexation of spirit; men who are not weary of chasing earth's mocking phantoms, and who are ready for new enterprises and new opportunities.

There is one refuge for discouraged men; there is one Leader who does not reject them nor despise them; there is one whose very mission it was to deal with discouraged men, to help those who are wearied in their earthly race, to deliver those who have fallen into captivity and bondage in earth's conflict, to uplift the fallen, and set the crown of triumph on the brow that has been bowed in the dust and darkness of defeat. Here broken hearts are bound up; here there is rest for the weary, peace for the troubled, strength for the fainting, and life for the dead.

Our Savior has help for every discouraged man, for every discouraged woman, for every discouraged child. He calls them to himself. He says "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." This is the place where discouraged men should apply.

From Sister Laura Slotter.

On this beautiful Sabbath evening, I will try to write a few of my thoughts, as a manifestation of the good will I entertain for my EVANGELIST friends.

I wonder how many of you who enjoyed worshipping God together to day as brethren, and sisters, thought of us who are temporarily as sheep having no shepherd.

It is now eight years since I joined in with a people whom we thought, or believed, took the Bible as a guide for the transactions of this life. I had four years previously attended worship with them, and after a Sabbath school was organized, became an earnest worker; after having co-operated in the Sunday school work for quite a while, they very earnestly invited me to unite and engage with them, also in church work. I told them I was ready anytime, as far as doctrine was concerned; but they seemed to have some peculiar notions about dress, which I could not understand as being right to enforce on others who thought differently; and that was perhaps too great a difference to justify me in taking such a step. They said, and seemed to, think not; so, after some deliberation, a compromise was effected. I was accordingly baptized; and the next day which was the happiest of my life, I spent at Bethel chapel, where preparations were being made for communion services. Congratulations were showered upon me, which made me feel all the more determined to be faithful in the cause I had so recently espoused. I enjoyed the communion, returned to my home realizing myself to be a new creature; because I had cheerfully and willingly complied with that which I believed the Gospel requires; and consequently felt myself equipped for a new walk in life. "The grace of God, the Blessed Comforter," Oh! who can afford to live without its ennobling influences.

The next time we met for communion services, sometime during the afternoon some one tapped me gently on the shoulder, saying that a couple of brethren out there, desired my presence for a little consultation; in response they told me that it had been decided that if I did not adopt the "sisters style" on communion occasions they would rather I should stay away from the communion table. Well! I thought; is it possible that I have been deceived? Will the church that I love so dearly resort to such treachery in order to establish their views, about matters in which God, no doubt, intended each individual to be his or her own judge? What a spectacle! A pledge broken, honesty disgraced, confidence destroyed and for the sake of something, and that a something too, for which they have no "Thus saith the Lord," else I would most willingly have yielded. God is truth; but deceit is of the Devil. We thought it best during the services for us to repair to the basement room, but we know the sobs and prayers emanating from that broken heart were heard by Him who said, "Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea." From that hour I have prayed the more earnestly that these yokes of bondage imposed upon us by selfish men, might be removed, and that right early. I cannot, nor would I if I could, enumerate the many persecutions which were mine to endure under the jurisdiction of the above named class; let this suffice, to say that, being a lover of truth and justice, their partial and deceitful ways became so detestable to me that I could no longer work with them. Then they disowned me: but right here is a query. Why did they not disown others who had failed to attend church much longer than I had? In a recent letter brother Binkley seems to entertain the idea that the conflicting elements in the church might yet become reconciled, if one may profit by another's experience, then I would say don't build on that hope, for it will most assuredly come to naught. We think we saw patience, truth, and justice, have all the desirable advantages to convince them of the error of their ways, but they to all appearance remain as obstinate as before. I believe that when people resist so determinedly the pleadings of the good Spirit they will be given over to a hardness of heart, from which they will be delivered with difficulty, if at all. When you pray for the isolated and persecuted, remember me and be assured that whatever trials you may have to meet during this conflict, my sympathy is with you. Perhaps few of you appreciate the EVANGELIST more highly than I, as a means or source of giving and getting sympathy. I believe there are many otherwise good brethren and sisters, who know that they should stand with us in defense of the truth, but fear the loss of friendships and that they might forfeit their rights to church houses etc. Dearly Beloved, remember there is a mystical, as

well as a visible church and that many who belong to the latter have never been initiated into the former; and that those of the former class possess that which the world can neither give nor take away,—the inestimable gift of God's grace; therefore we are expected to be willing to forsake friends, houses and all, if needs be, for Him who is preparing mansions for us, that where He is, there may we be also. Any wonder if he should purpose trying or testing our love for him? No! else he would not have told us. Happy thought, that though we may be exiled away from the society of those we dearly love we still have the blessed Comforter ever with us, reminding us of the precious promises left upon record for our encouragement. Let us fear not those cleansing fires which try the soul, but trust on; the years are flying quickly by, and we shall soon reap if we faint not.

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The Mission of Hymns.

Second only to the Bible is the influence of the hymns sung in our great congregations. The music may be all that can be desired, both in the composition and rendition, but it is but the setting of the gem, and in this instance can never outshine or eclipse the jewel itself. A well-read, appropriate hymn emphasizes the Scripture that has preceded it, and repeating the sentiment in measured cadences, serves to fix it more permanently in the mind. To become familiar with the history of our hymns, the circumstances under which they were written, the causes that produced them, the inspiration that controlled their creation, would add greatly to their interest and effect. Every one is familiar with the fact that a little bird flying into an open window and lighting on Charles Wesley's shoulder, was the occasion for the composition of that most lovely and touching of all our hymns:

Jesus, lover of my soul,
Let me to thy bosom fly;
While the billows near me roll,
While the tempest still is high,"

words that have comforted stricken hearts in life's stormiest, darkest hours. The writer can never, never forget with what energy of distraction a broken-hearted widow, whose husband had committed suicide, repeated this hymn again and again, realizing that this precious name was all that could keep her poor heart from breaking. Its full power was never felt until those broken notes from that bleeding heart grasped its sweet refrain, and again, and again, and again, repeating the precious fact to itself. Cowper's

"God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform,"

was a psalm of victory from a merciful dispensation that saved him from the crime of self-destruction in one of his often-recurring despondent moods. The driver of a London hack, in an exceedingly dark and stormy night, vainly endeavored to find a certain point of the Thames in the city, whither the poet was bound, bent on hiding himself and his misery in its dark waters. After a prolonged search for the spot with which he was very familiar in the light of day, he drove the poet back to his house, and upon reaching it, he realized the heavenly interposition that saved him from the commitment of a dark deed and wrote this hymn, which all Christians, whether they know it or not, are handing down the ages, as a signal instance of the interposition of Deity for the salvation of a loved one. The great missionary hymn, "From Greenland's icy mountains," that sounds like a bugle blast to the nations, was the inspiration of an hour preceding a meeting for the consideration of mission work, when such work meant, literally, taking one's life in one's hands and going forth to proclaim the great news of salvation to those who would not hesitate to mock, or murder, even, if opportunity offered. But time fails us now to write of the songs of Zion; but they will live—as they have lived—while there are lips to sing, or hearts to feel their power. Will "Rock of Ages" ever grow old? or "Come thou Fount of every blessing" cease to be summoned? or "All hail the power of Jesus' name" ever cease to be proclaimed? Let the hearts of Christians answer, and let them teach and sing them to their children, and their children's children to the latest generations. The writer will never forget the dear mother's face and voice, as attending to household tasks, or homely duties, she sang the sweet hymns that were thus baptized in the household, and now live sweetly in our hearts embalmed with the love of earth, as the love of heaven. The hymns sung at the family altar may be the ladder, on which the little feet may climb to heaven, singing as they go.

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